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WASHINGTON POST
20 July 1986

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It Has Deceived the West

It was 1963 and a hot August day in Mississippi. I remember that as brave and vulnerable black citizens came to register to vote, they had to walk a gantlet of angry, shouting people: on one side were the white extremists and on the other, also shouting threats and curses, were the black extremists, the Black Panthers and Black Muslims. This experience holds important lessons for South Africa and for U.S. policy today.

To have an effective policy we must understand that three coalitions are competing to shape the future of South Africa. A broad spectrum of blacks, whites and others are using peaceful means to end apartheid. Pro-apartheid white groups use violence against the government and against whites as well as blacks. And some organizations oppose apartheid but use the anti-apartheid struggle to create conditions that will bring them dictatorial power. The United States and all democratic countries should help the peaceful opponents of apartheid and oppose the violent groups, both those favoring and those opposing apartheid.

The African National Congress is the most visible of the violent antiapartheid groups. It seeks to mislead democratic countries about its true character. Founded in 1912, the ANC was initially noncommunist, even anticommunist. But for nearly 40 years its key leaders have been communists with close ties to the South African Communist Party and the Soviet bloc. In 1961 the ANC fomented an unsuccessful campaign of violence and established armed guerrilla groups. Since 1975 communist Angola and Mozambique as well as Libya and the PLO have provided military support to the ANC. In its most recent violence, the ANC has used mostly teen-age "comrades" to burn alive and hack to death many hundreds of moderate black community leaders and other totally innocent blacks. Explained an ANC spokesman: "A number of black stooges have been killed, many heads of black townships have been petrol-bombed because the people are now challenging these black collaborators." This is the classic technique of every antidemocratic group.

The ANC has misled and deceived many well-intentioned leaders and groups within the United States and other democratic countries into providing support. Many in the Western media are in effect building up the power of the ANC by failing to provide information on its methods, its communist leadership and its often declared goal of establishing a Marxist-Leninist regime.

Imagine the disappointment and demoralization among the peaceful and moderate American civil rights leaders in their years-long struggle if a Washington lobbying network, many European democracies and much of the media had focused on the violent, radical Black Muslims and Black Panthers as the preeminent antisegregation groups, rather than on the coalition led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. This is what is occurring as some Western groups fail to ask the key question: how to assure democracy after the end of apartheid.

For the end of apartheid is now in sight. The South African government has said apartheid will be disman-

tled, and it has taken a number of positive actions. These include revocation of the pass laws and of laws barring interracial marriage, and passage of new laws permitting blacks to own property and form labor unions. The pace of transition to democracy and the form it will take remain vital and complex issues for internal negotiation and consensus building among all the communities of South Africa: 22 million blacks; 5 million whites; 3 million of mixed race; and 1 million Asians.

The essentials of democracy are equal civil rights for all protected by law, freedom of speech, organization and assembly, and the consent of the governed validated by fair elections. Many democratic systems use principles of representation in addition to those strictly based on numbers: the United States has two senators for states of widely different populations, and an electoral college. In many recent transitions to democracy—such as in post-Franco Spain—negotiations led to agreement on the gradual expansion of electoral representation in the national congress.

American policy should support the pro-democratic, peaceful antiapartheid leaders and organizations of all ethnic groups—for example, the Reformed Churches Association "United Christian Action," Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha, the Africa Church of Zion (about 17 million of the 22 million blacks belong to these three organizations) and the democratic labor unions. The United States should oppose and isolate the violent antiapartheid groups such as the ANC, as well as the violent pro-apartheid groups. We should expand constructive engagement and encourage the building of multiracial democratic institutions.

The writer served until recently as special assistant for national security affairs to President Reagan.